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ABSTRACT

Although community colleges serve a culturally diverse student population, they, along with other institutions of higher education, have been slow to respond to that diversity. The implementation of a multicultural curriculum threatens the canonical knowledge upon which higher education is positioned. The canon elevates certain aspects of a society's culture over others and suppresses "border knowledge," or knowledge that resides outside of the cultural mainstream. Since border knowledge is most often embraced by those situated on society's margins of race, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation, multiculturalism can offer a response to the canon. Mainstream multiculturalism situates cultural diversity as subject matter to be learned and not as ways of thinking and doing that fundamentally challenge Euro-centrically-conceived institutions. Critical multiculturalism, however, combines the conditions of cultural diversity with the vision of a critical education practice drawing from feminism, postmodernism, and critical theory. Critical multiculturalism seeks to transform institutions from monolithic centers of power to democratic constellations in which organizational structures reflect diverse cultures and perspectives. For community colleges, embracing multiple forms of cultural knowledge, or border knowledge, is an important facet of meeting the challenge of serving a culturally diverse student clientele. (KP)

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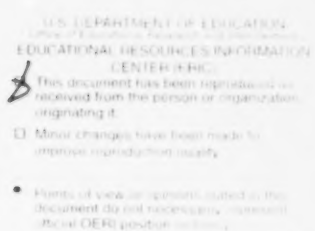
ED 383 370

SYMPOSIUM

ISSUES OF CULTURE AND CLASS IN TODAY'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES:
Extending Our Understanding of Multiculturalism

PAPER

Multiculturalism and Border Knowledge in Higher Education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Chapter One

Multiculturalism and Border Knowledge in Higher Education

In this book, we examine community college efforts to serve an increasingly diverse student population. We focus on the multiple roles community colleges enact in order to meet the needs of diverse clientele. More specifically, community colleges have struggled to meet the demands of students who vary by race, class, gender, and age, all the while embracing three primary roles: transfer, vocational, and community education. One by-product of facing multiple commitments is the lack of a clear sense of organizational identity that some writers characterize as the chaotic state of the community college. We argue that solutions lie not in simplifying the mission of the community college. Instead, solutions rest with the ability of community colleges to embrace organizational multiplicity--the idea of plural organizational identities. We suggest throughout this text that multiculturalism provides a connective thread that enables community colleges to embrace an organizational complexity characterized by multiplicity.

Although the lack of a well-defined organizational identity afflicts many community colleges, this is not the sole challenge they face. Another concern relates to the basic foundation of the community college and how education is enacted. We contend that the community college, more so than other types of postsecondary institutions in the United States, is founded on an authoritarian view of knowledge and pedagogy. Such a view situates certain understandings and ways of knowing above others. This is problematic for most educational institutions, but for those serving large numbers of culturally diverse

students, who often bring different understandings and diverse forms of knowledge to the educational setting, it is especially insidious. We suggest that multiculturalism and its commitment to democratic educational practice offers solutions to this dilemma as well.

Thus, two different but related narratives form the foci of our research and theorizing. The first narrative relates to the multiple missions of the community college and the lack of a clear organizational identity. The other narrative relates to the diverse students community colleges are expected to serve and the problem that authoritarian educational practices pose to embracing cultural diversity. We weave in and out of these two narratives the idea of multiculturalism. Our hope is to create a singular, coherent tale of community college education as the practice of democracy in which organizational multiplicity is seen not as a problem to be solved. Instead, multiplicity should be viewed as an essential aspect of organizational life in the late twentieth century.

This book is based on three years of organizational research conducted at five community colleges. Sites were selected because of their student diversity as well as their diverse programmatic offerings. The colleges studied do not necessarily reflect ideal types in the strict Weberian sense. At some sites, the institutions have struggled with cultural diversity and have succeeded to a degree in creating multicultural organizational structures. At other sites, the success has been limited. But, even in these negative cases, there is much to learn about multicultural education.

The general outline of the book follows. In chapter 2, we focus on the multiple roles community colleges enact and relate the discussion to multiculturalism. We also review the methodology used in conducting our research. In chapters 3 through 7, we present case

studies of five community colleges. We use theoretical insights related to multiculturalism to frame our analysis. In chapter 3, we examine how the organizational culture of a rural community college contributes to the production of a narrow sense of worker identity. Chapter 4 focuses on how student diversity might be treated in a more celebratory manner as we highlight an urban community college education center organized to serve Spanish-speaking immigrants. In chapter 5, our focus centers on issues of community responsiveness as we examine a community college high school developed primarily to serve urban African American students. Chapter 6 explores issues related to cultural capital and border knowledge as we examine developmental education at a rural community college. In chapter 7, we use a case study of an urban community college to clarify the notion of organizational multiplicity and to suggest ways that multiculturalism might help community colleges to deal with their complex and multiple roles. We conclude with chapter 8 by offering a comprehensive analysis of our findings and by suggesting some characteristics that a multicultural community college might have. We also highlight the broader implications of our work.

In the remainder of this chapter, we expand upon our conception of multiculturalism and discuss what we term as *critical multiculturalism*. We relate critical multiculturalism to issues of culture and identity, which are vital to understanding the role of community college education. The intent is to clarify a view of multiculturalism and the challenge it presents to authoritarian views of knowledge embraced most clearly in the idea of the canon. The concept of *border knowledge* and its relationship to cultural diversity is central

to this discussion. We also discuss what has been termed the "politics of identity" and its relationship to critical multiculturalism.

There are times in this first chapter that we seem a bit removed from the community college scene. This is intentional on our part and relates to the need to understand multiculturalism in the broadest context before applying the theoretical components of a multicultural vision to community colleges. In chapter 2 and in the subsequent case-study chapters, we refocus our analysis on the community college as we apply the multicultural perspective suggested here in chapter 1.

Campus Divisiveness or Cultural Diversity?

In debates about U.S. higher education, a dualism is often posited between the traditions of past excellence and calls for greater access and equity. Idyllic images of professors and students framed by a shared language and culture engaged in the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake are contrasted with portraits of campus divisiveness and curricula more resembling an *á la carte* menu than any coherent educational philosophy. There is little doubt that cultural diversity has pulled at the fabric that has structured higher education in this country for quite a few years.

But professors and students engaged in deep philosophical discourse has been the exception and not the rule, and enduring images are often reflections of the "good old days" that never were. Campus divisiveness is nothing new. At Harvard and Yale between 1745 and 1771, students frequently protested "the manner by which education was imparted" in what has been described as the "war with the tutors" (Moore, 1978, p. 125). Student revolts

in the early 1800s were commonplace as students rebelled against the authority of the "old-time" college and what many perceived as "political indoctrination" at the hands of federalist-leaning professors and clergy who sought to uphold "religion, morality, civilization, authority, and order" (Novak, 1977, p. 72). And there seems to have always been disruptions caused by student social clubs emerging with or without official institutional support (Horowitz, 1987). Frequently, student resistance has focused on the learning process, evidenced by Lyman Bagg's (1871) discussion of how the more socially-oriented students at Yale disliked the "grinds"--those students "digging and grinding for a stand [a good grade], existing all unconscious of the peculiar and delightful life about [them]" (p. 702). Clearly, students have for years found a multitude of ways to subvert the educational enterprise despite the best laid plans of faculty and administrators.

So divisiveness is hardly new, but it has taken on a somewhat different tenor. Instead of complaints about upper-division students disrupting the lives of first-year students, or students forming allegiances against faculty, or the socials sabotaging the grinds, issues of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation have become central to what some see as fragmentation within today's academe. Several recent developments support our point. Students at Mills College, a women's college founded over a century ago, went on strike and effectively halted the school's operations in protest of a decision by the college's trustees to admit men (McCurdy, 1990). "Their spirited exchanges and passionate commitment showed the world that what they appreciate first about women's colleges is the empowerment they experience in institutions that place women students at the center of their educational mission" (Hartman, 1990, p. A40). At the University of California at Los

Angeles, 99 students were arrested in demonstrations held to protest the university's refusal to grant Chicano Studies full academic status. Chicano students believed achieving departmental standing was a step toward strengthening the identity of the Chicano community (McCurdy, 1993). At the University of California at Berkeley a coalition of Asian American, Black, Latino, American Indian, and lesbian, gay, and bisexual students demonstrated over the lack of minority students and faculty, as well as the need to establish a Gay Studies department (Fifty-six Protesters, 1990). African American students at Pennsylvania State University organized a student takeover of the university's communications tower. The demonstration was held to protest the university's lack of commitment to improving the campus environment for African American students (DeLoughry, 1989). And finally, most recently African American students at Rutgers haulted and then forced the postponement of a highly anticipated Atlantic Ten basketball game in protest of degrading statements about African Americans made by the Rutgers University President.

Multiple interpretations exist as to the causes and outcomes of campus disharmony. For example, what appears in much of the higher education literature, often in the form of innuendo, is that cultural diversity is the major cause of both campus divisiveness as well as incoherent curricula. Open access and efforts to achieve equal opportunity often come under attack from conservative critics such as Dinesh D'Souza (1991) and Roger Kimball (1990), who see inclusionary practices as threats to the best traditions of U.S. higher education and as indications of how ideology has come to corrupt the academy. Bell hooks (1994) speaks to this reaction: "What we are witnessing today in our everyday life is not

an eagerness on the part of neighbors and strangers to develop a world perspective but a return to narrow nationalism, isolationisms, and xenophobia. These shifts are usually explained in New Right and neoconservative terms as attempts to bring order to chaos, to return to an (idealized) past" (p. 28). Their fear, as hooks goes on to note, is that "any de-centering of Western civilizations, of the white male canon, is really an act of cultural genocide" (p. 32).

Hooks and others suggest a different interpretation: that higher education institutions have been slow to respond to cultural diversity. The divisiveness witnessed on numerous campuses reflects what might be seen as a lack of institutional responsiveness. The principal reason postsecondary institutions have dragged their feet is because responding to cultural diversity, as in the implementation of a multicultural curriculum, threatens the canonical knowledge upon which the dominant forces in higher education are positioned.

The canon separates that which is deemed important from that which is not. The canon elevates certain aspects of a society's culture over others. It both centers and marginalizes types, ways, and sources of understanding. It tells us that art situated in a museum is superior to street art; classical music is superior to rap; and the writings of Shakespeare and Chaucer are superior to the work of Zora Neal Hurston and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The canon tells us that scientific knowledge is superior to spiritual or emotional understanding, and that knowledge produced by White European males is superior to the knowledge of women and people of color. In short, the hierarchical nature of the canon silences cultural diversity. Multiculturalism offers a response.

Multiculturalism and the Canonization of Knowledge

That which is selected to be part of the canon involves value judgments about the quality or aesthetics of specific works, ideas, ways of knowing, and forms of knowledge. For this reason, the canon should be understood as a form of ideology that suppresses what we term "border knowledge"--knowledge that resides outside of the canon, outside of the cultural mainstream. Border knowledge is essentially a form of cultural capital unworthy of exchange in mainstream educational settings. Border knowledge, of course, most often is embraced by those situated on society's margins. Race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and age all contribute to marginality. It is hardly surprising then that members of diverse cultural groups face the most serious challenges in negotiating college and university settings.

Although debates about the canon are oftentimes voiced in discussions of general education requirements at four-year colleges, we contend throughout this work that the canon--that which is deemed as appropriate knowledge to be attained by all educated people of a society--has major implications for how we structure community colleges. We need to be clear here. Community colleges are supposedly open access institutions and, in an idealized sense, represent higher education's commitment to democracy. As such, they attract a great diversity of students. Because of the border knowledge culturally diverse students bring with them, understanding the shortcomings of the canonization of knowledge is imperative to constructing democratic community colleges.

Furthermore, we argue that achieving greater equity in higher education is compatible with the goals of academic excellence. However, the manner in which

"excellence" gets defined needs to be brought into question. This implies that the canon and traditional views of knowledge acquisition must be challenged. Our intent is to create conceptions of academic excellence around the ideals of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is a central topic in today's debates about educational policy. To some, multiculturalism poses a threat to the best of what U.S. education has to offer--the values, beliefs, and traditions of Western civilization. For example, Diane Ravitch (1990) assails what she describes as "particularistic" multiculturalism for its criticism of a Eurocentric educational system and its attempt to "raise the self-esteem and academic achievement of children from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds" (p. 340). Ravitch argues that education in general and the curriculum in particular play an insignificant role in enhancing a student's self-esteem. Instead, educators ought to instill common values amongst all students regardless of their cultural heritage.

To others, multiculturalism is a means to achieve greater tolerance for diverse peoples. By offering courses and educational experiences that expose students to a wide range of cultures and world-views, both the majority and the minority will gain from increased understanding of the other. The assumption is that with increased awareness will come greater toleration for difference. Estela Bensimon (1994) criticizes this view of multiculturalism and describes it as the human relations perspective: "The human relations vision downplays 'differences,' because it is primarily concerned with the reduction of tension and conflict among different groups. Accordingly, curricular change that is framed in human relations terms will focus on the development of more accepting attitudes" (p. 13). This is the most common expression of multiculturalism on today's college campuses

and involves the study of topics related to various ethnic and racial groups, gender and sexual identity differences, international issues, non-Western cultures, and issues pertaining to the physically challenged (Gaff, 1992, p. 32).

The human relations view of multiculturalism, which we term "mainstream multiculturalism," fails to transform monocultural institutions into multicultural democratic communities because it situates cultural diversity as subject matter to be learned and not as ways of thinking and doing that fundamentally challenge Eurocentrically-conceived institutions. As Patrick Hill (1991) maintains, "We would not have changed much if all we achieve is a sprinkling of multi-cultural courses in the departments. . . . Marginalization will be perpetuated. . . if new voices and perspectives are added while the priorities and core of the organization remain unchanged" (pp. 44-45). Mainstream multiculturalism has a limited impact, as it is easily assimilated through its compartmentalization within the curriculum.

Still others see multiculturalism as much more than learning about diverse cultures and cultural groups. In contrast to mainstream multiculturalism, what we term as *critical multiculturalism* combines the conditions of cultural diversity with the emancipatory vision of a critical educational practice drawing from feminism, postmodernism, and critical theory. Critical multiculturalism seeks to transform educational institutions from monolithic centers of power to democratic constellations in which organizational structures reflect diverse cultures and perspectives. From this point of view, multiculturalism reaches into the depths of what educational institutions <u>are</u> with the hope of creating what <u>ought</u> to be. Bensimon (1994) elaborates: "We must recognize that the perspective of multiculturalism,

the struggle to create a more democratic, pluralistic education system in this country, is part of the struggle to empower people. . . . Such an education seeks not to inform but to transform" (p. 7). For the remainder of this book, when we use the term multiculturalism, we imply a critical multicultural perspective akin to that described by Bensimon.

Multiculturalism is often pitted against the canon. For good reason. The canon calls forth a common culture--a culture that we all share as members of the same society. And herein lies part of the problem. The cultural experience of people residing in the United States is so diverse that common connections are not easily observed, nor are they easily achieved. Invoking a common culture, a canon, reinforces the cultural knowledge some possess, while at the same time indoctrinating others to this cultural knowledge. The concern of multiculturalists relates not to the importance of learning about other cultures, an idea they embrace as well. Their concern is the positioning of one culture over all others. For example, Western civilization is seen to be superior to others. Knowledge produced by the upper and middle classes is superior to lower class knowledge production. Men's achievements are elevated over women's. Knowledge produced by Whites is held in higher regard than that produced by people of color.

What is at stake is respect for and celebration of cultural difference. The canon encourages homogenization of society through assimilation on the part of culturally diverse peoples. The canon is antidemocratic because it silences those on culture's borders. Resistance to the canon is not the decline of higher education, as some conservatives might have us believe. Instead, resistance may be interpreted as a sign of rising democracy. Edmund Gordan and Maitrayee Bhattacharyya (1992) argue that, "The need to celebrate

uniqueness in our society, interestingly enough, is at issue not because it is necessarily a new phenomenon, but is due in part to the progress the society has made toward democratization" (p. 407).

Resistance to the canon also reflects the changing demographics of U.S. society evident to a lesser degree on our college and university campuses. Understanding the changing demographics therefore is important to our ability to comprehend the historical, political, and cultural implications of debates about multiculturalism and the canon.

Cultural Diversity and Higher Education

The ascendancy of multiculturalism, of course, parallels the changing demographics of U.S. society and those who participate in higher education. In light of changing demographics, multiculturalism may be seen as a response to cultural diversity. At no time in the history of U.S. higher education has the student population been as culturally diverse as it is today. For example, Elaine El-Khawas (1992) reports that during the academic year 1991-1992, more than half of the 411 colleges and universities surveyed by the American Council on Education increased their enrollment of African American students. At the same time, nearly half of these same institutions increased their enrollment of Hispanic and Asian American students. Approximately one-fourth of the institutions increased their enrollment of Native American students. And 60% of the institutions reported increases in the number of students who are 25 or older.

Immigration has been a major factor in the changing demographics. During the 1970s, the U.S. experienced the highest percentage of population growth accounted for by

immigration since the period between 1900 and 1920: The foreign-born population accounted for over 19% of the total population growth, some 4.46 million people. The foreign-born population continued to grow throughout the 1980s as more than 6 million people migrated to the United States. In terms of geography, the majority of recent immigrants to the U.S. have come from Asia or Latin America (La Belle & Ward, 1994). This trend is expected to continue throughout the 1990s.

Demographic projections suggest that by the year 2000, one-third of all school-age children will be from minority groups and that 42% of all public school children will be from minority or lower socioeconomic backgrounds (American Council on Education, 1988). And, of course, only a few years later, many of these students will be participating in postsecondary education.

Recent findings from The Almanac (1994) published annually by The Chronicle of Higher Education also are revealing. For example, we know that nearly 23% of all students attending college are from minority groups. Furthermore, women outnumber men by nearly a million and a half and constitute roughly 55% of the student body. In relation to community colleges, The Almanac points out that student enrollment at two-year colleges amounts to nearly half of the overall U.S. undergraduate population. Of special significance to our work is the fact that 53% of African American, Hispanic, and Native American undergraduates attend two-year colleges, whereas the percentage of White undergraduates who attend these same institutions is 43%. Compare this to the fact that 77% of the undergraduates who attend four-year institutions are White, and only 18% are African American, Hispanic, or Native American students. The disproportionate

representation of minority students at two-year colleges makes issues of multiculturalism that much more relevant to community college settings.

The diversity of today's student body poses a challenge to postsecondary institutions. Stage and Manning (1992) argue that cultural diversity has made educational practice more complex than ever and call for revised policies and procedures. They highlight six weaknesses of traditional approaches to working with students: (a) assuming that culturally diverse students must change, (b) making culturally diverse students, faculty, and administrators already in the institution responsible for socializing other new students from similar backgrounds, (c) encouraging culturally diverse students to adapt to the dominant culture, (d), helping only identifiable diverse students, (e) failing to provide equitable educational opportunities to all students admitted to the institution, and (f) failing to educate those of the dominant culture about their culturally diverse colleagues.

The fundamental flaw of today's colleges and universities, as Stage and Manning argue, is that they continue to operate from a monocultural view. More specifically, U.S. social institutions, including schools, are predominantly based on Eurocentric cultural norms. They argue that a weakness of monoculturalism is its inability to consider other cultural traditions and perspectives. Monoculturalism, which is akin to the canon, projects one culture as superior to all others and is reflected in organizational structures and practices. If U.S. colleges and universities are to survive in an increasingly diverse society, Stage and Manning (1992) argue, they "must change from a monoculturalist to multiculturalist perspective" (p. 16).

Stage and Manning call attention to the fact that barriers to enacting multicultural academic communities involve confronting not only the canonization of the curriculum, but also the canonization of organizational beliefs and practices. Revising the curriculum without altering the underlying organizational fabric is akin to renovating a house by painting it, but doing nothing to alter its underlying structure. Hence, conservative and mainstream multicultural strategies often reflect mere housekeeping efforts in which students are required to take a "diversity" or "diversity enhanced" course, which in many cases they do begrudgingly. Little is changed as multiculturalism is effectively assimilated into the traditional structures of the institution. In the end, the power of multiculturalism to transform the academy is lost, and the hopes that rest upon it are betrayed.

The question that we pursue throughout this book relates to how community colleges might move from a monocultural perspective to a multicultural organizational framework. Our focus is both on the underlying organizational culture or structure (the frame and foundation of the house) as well as its most visible representation--the curriculum. To understand where our work must head, we need to come to terms with the effects of the canonization of knowledge.

Border Knowledge and the Canon

The concept of border knowledge is central to our work. Students who possess the proper knowledge, that which relates to the canon, tend to do well. These students are able to exchange their knowledge for academic (and later economic) returns. Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) notion of "cultural capital" is another way of understanding this exchange. Instead of

money being traded for goods, cultural knowledge is exchanged for academic success. Those with the "wrong" cultural capital, those possessing border knowledge, tend to do poorly. Because the academy is predominantly framed by a European White male, middle- and upper-class perspective, women, members of diverse racial groups, and the lower and working classes are inherently disadvantaged. They possess forms of knowledge that, for the most part, are not rewarded in traditional academic settings.

Border knowledge is not as exchangeable as mainstream knowledge or canonized knowledge. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds are in effect penalized for their cultural identities because the acquisition of border knowledge derives from one's cultural background. For this reason, issues of culture and identity must be central to discussions of how colleges and universities ought to be structured, and how the curriculum ought to be shaped. For example, educational researchers have long pointed out the inequalities involved in traditional methods (especially standardized measures) used to assess intelligence and educational achievement (Dawes, 1993; Ferguson, 1991; Magolda, 1992; Sternberg, 1988). The idea that cultural backgrounds privilege some and marginalize others is by no means a new argument. Our contribution to this issue lies in what follows--in how these issues relate to community colleges and their challenge to serve diverse students. Although similar arguments have been made before, we must revisit them in order to make our position clear.

On the one hand, conservative critics such as Allan Bloom (1987) and E. D. Hirsch (1987) see the problem quite simply: Schools are not doing a very good job of conveying to students the kind of knowledge they need to succeed in U.S. society. And, of course, the

type of knowledge needed is the language and cultural base of middle- and upper-class White male America. Progressive educators, on the other hand, maintain that the canon, as it is traditionally constituted by the likes of Hirsch and Bloom, ignores the cultural backgrounds and experiences diverse students bring to the schooling process. For democratic educators such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux, the requirement of a common core of knowledge is nothing more than an assimilationist strategy used to silence cultural difference and stifle democracy. The canon promotes a unitary and simplistic view of culture and strives to produce and reproduce a homogeneous society.

The core or the canon is about cultural capital--that knowledge needed to succeed within the United States social, economic, and political systems. Somewhat surprisingly, scholars such as Harold Bloom (1994) question whether the concept has any relevance: "Is there, has there ever been, any 'cultural capital' in the United States of America?" (p. 518). He goes on to describe multiculturalists as members of the School of Resentment "who wish to overthrow the Canon in order to advance their supposed (and nonexistent) programs for social change" (p. 4). His statement is inaccurate. Yes, multiculturalists raise questions about the canon. Not only do they question what gets included as relevant knowledge, they also question a process that enables some educators to make such choices while others go unheard. Furthermore, multiculturalists take issue with the notion that knowledge is static and therefore can be grouped into coherent texts and passed onto students as if they are the receptacles of a society's relevant knowledge. Multiculturalists stress education as the process of engaging in critical thought and discussion about the construction of knowledge. Knowledge is seen as dynamic. From such a perspective, the teacher no longer is viewed as

the keeper of relevant facts and information, but instead facilitates student inquiry and debate about what gets defined as knowledge. In a very real sense, the social program multiculturalists offer involves a restructuring of education in which the teacher-and-student relationship exists on a more level plain where authority is no longer the central fiber connecting one to the other. Knowledge is seen as contested terrain. Students are seen to possess a whole range of knowledge, experience, and understanding that they bring with them to the classroom, and which is worth sharing with other students and teachers. This is a more democratic view of education and one that we discuss further in chapter 2 and throughout this text.

Harold Bloom, however, argues that certain texts are aesthetically superior to others and such texts should constitute the canon. What he fails to accept is that even questions of aesthetics involve value judgments, judgments that are inherently ideological. While Bloom finds Goethe aesthetically pleasing and thus includes his work as part of the canon, a multicultural educator might prefer to discuss a work such as I, Rigoberto Menchu, because of the story of cultural identity and human struggle expressed in its unique narrative. Bloom argues from an ideology of aesthetics. Multiculturalists argue from an ideology founded on equality, justice, and freedom. Neither position is neutral, although clearly one is democratic and the other authoritarian.

Multiculturalists restructure educational settings around democratic ideals that encourage inclusiveness. Bloom fails to see the connection between education and democracy and instead resorts to a hierarchical view of knowledge and understanding. This is never more clear than in his discussion of poetry and its accessibility: "The strongest

poetry is cognitively and imaginatively too difficult to be read deeply by more than a relative few of any social class, gender, race, or ethnic origin" (p. 520). Presumably, Bloom is one of the few capable of such deep thought.

Bloom's vision of intelligence and cognitive complexity reflects a modernist perspective in which intelligence and creativity are seen as static and innate qualities of a privileged few (Kincheloe, 1995). Multiculturalists see the literary complexities of poetry as something open to everyone and refuse to situate poetry, music, art, theorizing, and other forms of cultural production within rigid hierarchies that only serve to marginalize the multiple ways people have of making sense of their worlds. The objective of multiculturalists is to create educational settings in which authoritarian views of culture, knowledge, and identity are challenged. Because democracy lies at the center of their values, no one should be excluded from participation. As Giroux (1993) maintains, "At issue here is an emancipatory notion of authority that should be fashioned in pedagogical practices rewritten in terms that articulate the importance of creating the conditions for students to take up subject positions consistent with the principles of equality, justice, and freedom rather than with interests and practices supportive of hierarchies, oppression, and exploitation" (p. 55). Traditionalist claims to a common culture or a canon of knowledge are merely efforts to reposition certain individuals and structures as the gatekeepers and gates of academe and necessarily the prime lenders of cultural capital. We draw from Giroux once again: "Lacking the courage to rework dominant traditions in light of a changing present and future, conservatives continue to develop 'imaginary unities' aimed at creating rigid cultural boundaries that serve to seize upon fear and cultural racism" (p. 69).

Achieving inclusionary colleges and universities committed to the principles of equality, justice, and freedom involves significant change in the way we think about the educational process. Such change involves recognizng and understanding the significance of border knowledge and its relationship to culture and identity. From the perspective of multiculturalism, the central problem faced by higher education institutions within the United States relates to matters of culture and identity. Whether through disagreements about recruiting diverse faculty, or debates about admission criterion and the need to diversify the student body, or curriculum debates over the relevance of cultural knowledge, or concerns over increasing the supply of women engineering graduates, or discussions of declining SAT scores, the theme is clear: Race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and age matter. The ever-increasing diversity that students bring to classrooms continues to produce mass confusion about how to teach, what to teach, and even who to teach.

Part of a multicultural critique of education relates not only to what gets taught and what gets defined as relevant knowledge, but also to the very nature of teaching itself. Traditionalists, on the one hand, tend to view education as the transmission of knowledge. Teachers convey knowledge to the student in the form of factoids (small isolated pieces of knowledge), which are to be memorized one by one (Kincheloe, 1995). The student becomes a consumer of factoids much like PAC-man eats flashing dots in the once popular video game. Standardized teaching and learning plans dictate the sequence and direction of the students' consumption as the student becomes a passive recipient in the educational process.

On the other hand, multiculturalists argue that education should focus not so much on transferring information and facts as on challenging students to engage as full participants in both education and social life. This means structuring the classroom in such a way that students are free and willing to enter into dialogue with professors and other students. The educational goals of multiculturalists and traditionalists are different. Because traditionalists see knowledge as a given body of facts, principles, and information that accumulates as knowledge is advanced, the goal for students is to acquire as much knowledge as is necessary to effectively function in U.S. society. And, of course, to function effectively typically gets defined in terms of vocationalism and fitting in to the U.S. labor force. Multiculturalists focus more on process. They see the goal of education as more than the accumulation of knowledge. They view education instead as the devlopment of the ability to think critically and independently. Those who develop this ability thus can engage as a full participant in a democratic society--not just in economic terms, but as a participant in governance and cultural politics as well.

Significantly different outcomes result from these disparate goals. Because the goal of traditionalists is to pass knowledge on from one generation to the next, through the relationship of teacher as expert and student as neophyte, students become for the most part passive recipients of the best of what society has produced--the canon. As a result, the values, beliefs, customs, and practices of a society, which are inherently part of the canon, get reproduced. Simply stated, since students are not encouraged to be critics of what gets defined as knowledge, questions about the way things are often do not get raised.

Because multiculturalists concern themselves with creating a classroom and an educational environment where students actively engage in discussion and in decision making, students become active participants in the schooling process. Education viewed in this manner is guided by visions of social justice in which equality and the right to be heard are vital concerns. We draw from Iris Marion Young (1990): "A goal of social justice. . . is social equality. Equality refers not primarily to the distribution of goods, though distributions are certainly entailed by social equality. It refers primarily to the full participation and inclusion of everyone in a society's major institutions, and the socially substantive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realize their choices" (p. 173). As active participants in the educational process, students are better able to form opinions and make informed choices about their culture and society and where they fit in the larger scheme of things. Because the ideals of equality, justice, and freedom are central to the educational process, current structures and social arrangements that impinge upon democratic ideals are more likely to be challenged. Social and cultural change becomes possible, if not inevitable.

Again, issues of culture and identity are paramount. If the status quo gets reproduced, those situated on society's borders remain marginalized. The idea of a common culture and a common body of relevant knowledge promotes the universalization of identity. Such a project necessarily leads to cultural hierarchies contained in notions of the privileged and the deprived, the insider and the outsider, the dominant and the subjugated. La Belle and Ward (1994) discuss multiculturalism as a concept that heightens our understanding of intergroup relations and conflict not only over power and resources, but in

terms of social identities as well. The issues we speak of here are what some describe as the "the politics of identity."

The Politics of Identity

In recent years, issues of culture and identity have become increasingly vital to educational theory and research. Schools play a pivotal role in identity formation, and both reflect and shape the cultural borders within which they operate. Penelope Eckert (1989), Jay MacLeod (1987), Peter McLaren (1986, 1989), and Paul Willis (1977) reveal how social class contributes to students' sense of self and the resistance they offer to the schooling process. Michelle Fine (1991) demonstrates how issues of race, class, and gender relate to persistence among urban high school students. And Angela McRobbie (1978) describes how notions of femininity get reproduced among working-class girls in school settings.

Research on colleges and universities also reveals the interconnections between schooling and issues of culture and identity. For example, Dorothy Holland and Margaret Eisenhart (1990) uncover a "culture of romance" that contributes to a lowering of career aspirations among groups of college women. William Tierney (1992) explores how Native American students oftentimes are forced to leave behind their own cultural heritage in order to be successful in mainstream colleges and universities. Robert Rhoads (1994) examines the struggles gay students face as they "come out" in a university setting whose culture is largely hostile to lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities. And finally, Lois Weis (1985) contributes to this growing body of literature through her study of African American

students attending an urban community college. She highlights the problems students face when the culture they produce is incongruent with the culture of the institution.

In all of the preceding works, many of which are ethnographic in nature, issues of culture and identity are central to how students experience the educational process. Emerging from this body of research and corresponding to notions generated largely by postmodernism and feminism is a heightened awareness of how culturally diverse students and people are depicted in educational research and writing. Such depictions are often discussed in terms of issues of representation or representational practice. Just as feminism and postmodernism have challenged what gets defined as truth and as knowledge, they also have raised concerns about how cultural identities get situated within social hierarchies that elevate some to superior and others to subordinate status.

Postmodernism and feminism pose a challenge to the sanctity of knowledge and truth. In a touch of irony, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) calls all truisms fallacious. He argues that science offers only one interpretation of knowledge: "It has always existed in addition to, and in competition and conflict with, another kind of knowledge, which I will call narrative" (p. 7). Lyotard's work and that of other postmodernists and feminists is helpful in that they situate knowledge within the context of power and domination (McNeil, 1993; Nicholson, 1990; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Recognition of the theoretical and practical connections between knowledge and power is especially pertinent to understanding issues of culture and identity within the context of educational settings: "As old borders and zones of cultural difference become more porous or eventually collapse, questions of

culture increasingly become interlaced with issues of power, representation, and identity" (Giroux, 1993, p. 90).

For Lyotard, there is only narrative--context-specific understandings of social life. Lyotard highlights the relational quality of postmodern understanding. A similar idea is conveyed by feminist scholars who speak of "relational standpointism." Maureen Cain (1993) explains that, "The gist of the argument is that anyone producing knowledge occupies a relational and historical site in the social world which is likely to shape and set limits to the knowledge formulations produced" (p. 88).

Postmodernism and feminism call attention to the idea that knowledge is relational. Normativity is displaced by multiplicity, which depicts social and cultural phenomena more in terms of complexity and difference than simplicity and similarity. The rise of such notions of knowledge and truth has helped us to understand that truth claims do not exist on their own; they must be grounded in specific positions and assumptions. As Michel Foucault (1978, 1980) points out, that which is determined to be true is largely the product of who has the power to assert and insert a specific discourse into public consciousness. In support of Foucault, Laurel Richardson notes, "Wherever truth is claimed, so is power; the claim to truth is a claim to power" (1991, p. 173). And, Steven Seidman adds, "Concealed in the will to truth is a will to power" (1991, p. 135).

Like notions of knowledge and truth, cultural identities also are framed by discourses contingent to a large degree on power relations. Power is evident through the ability to control the discourse or the language of identity. Stuart Hall (1990) elaborates on this point: "Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of

identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin'" (p. 226).

To further understand the politics of identity in relation to schooling, one must make sense of culture. Culture is an often-used expression that conveys the values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes shared by a group of people. It is a concept that can be applied to a wide array of human groups, as large as whole societies, as small as dyads. Culture provides a framework for interaction within social groups. For example, when a student interacts with his or her professor, knowledge about the professor's role and the student's role frames how such interactions ought to occur. Indeed, those students who lack the cultural capital related to student-and-professor interactions are less likely to leave such interactions satisfied. They may walk away without having obtained an understanding of the homework assignment, the grading procedure, or the attendance policy. Most of us can recall instances when our interactions with others, oftentimes people in positions of authority over us, were unstaisfying. Perhaps, we left someone's office confused and unsure of what the discussion was all about. For students from diverse cultural backgrounds, navigating one's way through academe can be full of confused and ambiguous interactions.

Although culture provides a guiding framework for interactions, culture is continuously revised through those same interactions (Geertz, 1973). And here is why we speak of culture and identity in terms of politics. Because culture and social interaction have a reciprocal relationship, it is possible through contestation and struggle to engage

culture with the hope of transformation. At the risk of oversimplification, let us return to the issue of the canonization of knowledge versus multicultural education.

To promote the canon is to promote one vision of culture. William Bennett (1984) describes the humanities as "the best that has been said, thought, written, and otherwise expressed about the human experience" (p. 3). To exclude Shakespeare's MacBeth, Plato's Republic, or Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn from the canon is to deny students the opportunity of inheriting the best of what our culture has to offer. Of course, the underlying assumption is that such forms of cultural production need to be perpetuated. Such a notion is clearly revealed in another passage from Bennett: "Great souls do not express themselves by the written word only; they also paint, sculpt, build, and compose. An educated person should be able not only to recognize some of their works, but also to understand why they embody the best of our culture" (p. 11). One cannot help but wonder to whose culture Bennett refers when he writes about "our culture." Clearly, the music of Bach and Mozart are part of "our" culture, and just as clear is the fact that the current work of Salt-n-Pepa and Nine Inch Nails is not.

Multiculturalists take issue with the elevation of cultural forms over others based on vague notions of aesthetic value. Multiculturalists argue that all forms of cultural production exist within social relations framed by power. Classical music is held in higher regard than rap because those who prefer classical have the power to define it as superior. Most important to what multiculturalists seek to accomplish is the fact that just as culture gets elevated to superior or subordinate, social identities also become categorized in a similar manner.

To reject the canon and instead provide a diversity of learning experiences designed to engage students and teachers in a critique of knowledge and cultural production is to take issue with the hierarchical nature of social identities. The goal is not only to understand cultural identities different from our own, but to move beyond classifications that seek to marginalize and disempower. We are not talking about cultural relativism as conservative critiques often assert. The underlying values of justice, equality, and freedom guide multicultural pedagogy. This is by no means relativistic. In essence, multiculturalists seek to overthrow claims to political neutrality underlying an ideology of aesthetics with a more open and forthright commitment to democratic ideals.

Culture not only provides the parameters for our social interactions, it provides a framework for how we define ourselves in relation to others. Culture offers representations of people. These representations contribute to how identities are understood. The politics of identity involves raising questions about how people are represented through culture. Such questions in the end serve as challenges to the very means our society has used to define knowledge and truth. As Trinh Minh-ha (1991) maintains, "To raise the question of representing the Other is. . . to reopen endlessly the fundamental issue of science and art; documentary and fiction; masculine and feminine; outsider and insider" (p. 65).

But the politics of identity moves beyond merely understanding how forms of cultural production have named and situated otherness. The politics of identity both interrogates the intent behind representations and attempts to create newer self-representations. For people who exist on culture's borders, the struggle to create one's own representations is necessarily a struggle to seize power. Cornell West (1993) writes about

this issue in his discussion of the "new cultural politics of difference," primarily in reference to Black struggle: "The intellectual challenge--usually cast as methodological debate in these days in which academicist forms of expression have a monopoly on intellectual life--is how to think about representational practices in terms of history, culture and society. How does one understand, analyze and enact such practices today?" (p. 5). For West, this question cannot be answered unless one first comes to terms with previous struggles to create more honest and empowering self-representations. Understanding the role history, culture, and society have played in situating people's lives is crucial to moving toward newer forms of representation.

But, history, culture, and society are not static concepts; they are theoretical constructs that serve as vehicles to engage oneself and others in the process of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing knowledge and truth. The goal, as West (1993) explains, involves more than merely expanding access and contesting stereotypes: "Black cultural workers must constitute and sustain discursive and institutional networks that deconstruct earlier modern black strategies for identity-formation, demystify power relations that incorporate class, patriarchal and homophobic biases, and construct more multivalent and multidimensional responses that articulate the complexity and diversity of black practices in the modern and postmodern world" (p. 20).

West calls attention to the fact that ongoing agency--social action grounded in emancipatory theory and self-reflection--is crucial to successful engagement in the politics of identity. Agency, of course, is grounded in the hope of a more just and equitable society. Multiculturalism situates agency at the center of its educational goals and objectives. The

hope, of course, is a vision of a society where those currently situated on society's borders have a voice in a truly democratic process. The vision calls for social transformation, as bell hooks (1992) highlights in her discussion of representations of race:

> The issue is really one of standpoint. From what political perspective do we dream, look, create, and take action? For those of us who dare to desire differently, who seek to look away from the conventional ways of seeing blackness and ourselves, the issue of race and representation is not just a question of critiquing the status quo. It is also about transforming the image, creating alternatives, asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our world views and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad. Making a space for the transgressive image, the outlaw rebel vision, is essential to any effort to create a context for transformation. And even then little progress is made if we transform images without shifting paradigms, changing perspectives, ways of looking. (p. 4)

Hooks moves us closer to the crux of our argument. Educational institutions are composed of people who make representations of others to themselves, to colleagues, to the public, and to students. The representations we adopt may not be revealed through our discourse because a variety of sensitivities have taught us to conceal and in effect enact a symbolic form of discrimination--symbolic not because it is not real, but because it is

hidden in actions that have underlying meanings that must be interpreted. Despite an acquired proficiency for hiding prejudice and disdain of the other, representations oftentimes emerge in the context of educational programs and pedagogical practices. In other words, the assumptions we have of the other are revealed through the educational endeavors we adopt in relation to our students. When we create educational structures that prepare students from lower socioeconomic classes for nonprofessional careers without stressing their potential to assume leadership positions in social, political, and economic institutions, a representation of class is made. When we provide inner-city Chicano students opportunities to acquire vocational skills, but close the door to other possibilities, the racial representations educators adopt about those students is apparent. When we channel women away from science and mathematics programs because the demands are too great, a representation of gender gets reproduced. By the same token, when we offer upper- and middle-class White males the education and training enabling them to assume positions of corporate and political power, representations of those students are apparent as well.

This leads us to these questions: How do we structure community colleges in a way that diverse social identities are celebrated instead of silenced and honored instead of scorned? How can we ensure that the knowledge and experiences brought by diverse students are shared instead of suppressed? What will the community college look like when critical multiculturalism forms the basis of our actions?

As we see it, a fundamental goal of educational institutions, including community colleges, is to contribute to changing the relations of representations. Understanding issues related to culture and identity are central to how we go about this task. Perhaps nowhere is

this more true than in community college settings where nearly half of all students come from underrepresented backgrounds. Our objective in this book is to explore community college settings with issues of culture and identity in mind as we seek to build multicultural educational centers. We argue that issues of cultural diversity affect us in both broad and specific ways--ways that we have yet to fully understand.

For example, can community colleges prepare students for vocational careers and at the same time instill critical thinking skills that contribute to a student's sense of civic and social responsibility? How can we expect community colleges to increase the educational attainment of students from underrepresented groups (and thus encourage transfer to four-year schools) when many of these very students exist at or near the poverty level (and thus have as a preeminent concern the immediate economic return that a vocational career may offer)? How can we provide not-for-credit remedial education for community college students whose economic limitations often restrict their ability to pursue additional credits and thus attain a degree? How can we expect community colleges to educate immigrants and non-English speaking populations when they are already overburdened with multiple functions and responsibilities? These are questions we explore as we delineate what it means to build a multicultural community college.

The central challenge faced by community colleges is to serve a culturally diverse student clientele. By necessity, this involves two important facets: enacting multiple organizational roles and embracing multiple forms of cultural knowledge--border knowledge. Both produce a community college characterized by multiplicity. We argue

throughout this book that multiculturalism offers solutions to the complex problems inherent in organizational multiplicity.

In the next chapter, we explore the many roles that community colleges embrace. We highlight the organizational incongruence that often results from such varied missions and argue that multiculturalism offers a connective thread grounded in education as the practice of democracy. Also highlighted are the methods used to collect data for this book.